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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes that the original theory and practice of discipline based art education (DBAE) of the 1980s are undergoing significant changes, and that Neo-DBAE is emerging in the 1990s. Changes in original DBAE theory and practice of the 1980s are discussed, and reasons for such changes are proposed. Some identified changes are: more encompassing curriculum content, an integration of art with other subject areas, and variable forms of assessment. It is suggested that Neo-DBAE is a response to postmodern developments, reform movements, multiculturalism, and teacher proactivism. Neo-DBAE is also the result of criticisms of original DBAE theory and practice in the 1980s. This study consists of a discussion of the following: (1) DBAE theory and practice in the 1980s, (2) theory and practice in the 1990s that suggest the development of Neo-DBAE, (3) characteristics of Neo-DBAE, and (4) factors contributing to the emergence of neo-DBAE. DBAE is defined as a theory of art instruction that emphasizes the disciplinary character of art and the study of art for its own sake. DBAE proponents proposed that art study consist of studio production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics, with written curricula, and content of the four areas sequenced within and between grades. Learning outcomes would be identifiable and assessed through formal measures. Neo-DBAE is characterized as somewhat post modern in that it incorporates aspects of multiculturalism and collective decision making. It is contextually responsive to the needs of teachers and students, and allows for variable learning outcomes. (DK)

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The Emergence of Neo-DBAE

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Abstract

Discipline-based art education (DBAE) initiated in the 1980s is undergoing significant changes. In this paper, it is proposed that Neo-DBAE is emerging in the 1990s. Changes in original DBAE theory and practice of the 1980s are identified, i.e., more encompassing curriculum content, an integration of art with other subject areas, and qualitative forms of assessment. Possible reasons for the evolution of Neo-DBAE are presented: criticisms of DBAE, general education reforms, multiculturalism, and teacher proactivism.

The Emergence of Neo-DBAE

The proposal of discipline-based art education in the 1980s heralded a major shift in art education theory and practice. As could be expected, discipline-based art education (hereafter referred to as DBAE) also elicited more scrutiny and criticism than another other movement in the field of art education. Unfortunately, much that was proposed, implemented, reacted to, and criticized in the 1980s remains as established ideas on DBAE. In this paper it is proposed that the original theory and practice of DBAE of the 1980s are undergoing significant changes--and that Neo-DBAE is emerging in the 1990s. Changes in original DBAE theory and practice of the 1980s are discussed, and reasons for such changes are proposed. Some identified changes are more encompassing curriculum content, an integration of art with other subject areas, and variable forms of assessment. It is suggested that Neo-DBAE is a response to postmodern developments, reform movements, multiculturalism, and teacher proactivism. Neo-DBAE is also the result of criticisms of original DBAE theory and practice in the 1980s.

DBAE theory and practice have dominated the concerns of many art educators (both supporters and critics) for almost a decade. Given the sociopolitical climate of the 1980s, the conservative aspects of DBAE in the 1980s were understandable--as well as the criticisms DBAE elicited. However, recent changes in DBAE theory and practice have been less predictable. Moreover, many of these changes have been overlooked by art education researchers. Although new developments in DBAE are part of policy statements, ongoing programs, publications, and conference topics,

these new (neo) DBAE characteristics are not specifically identified or discussed in art education literature. Considering the influence DBAE has had, and continues to have, on the field of art education, it is important for art educators to be aware of changes in DBAE, to participate in DBAE's ongoing construction and/or criticism, and to understand the extent to which postmodern factors and critical input have influenced and fostered change in DBAE theory and practice. Toward those ends, this study consists of a discussion of the following: (a) DBAE theory and practice in the 1980s, (b) theory and practice in the 1990s that suggest the development of Neo-DBAE, (c) characteristics of Neo-DBAE, and (d) factors contributing to the emergence of Neo-DBAE.

A Brief Background

Through publications and policy statements put forth by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, DBAE was initiated as a theory of art instruction that emphasized the disciplinary character of art and the study of art for its own sake (The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1985; Greer, 1984). DBAE proponents proposed that art study consist of studio production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. Curricula should be in written form, and the content of the four areas of study sequenced within and between grades and implemented district-wide. In a DBAE program, learning outcomes would be identifiable and assessed through formal measures.

Criticisms of DBAE

DBAE evolved from theory to implemented practice broadly supported

by ideas presented at conferences and symposia, through numerous publications, and through programs supported by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts (The Getty Center, 1990). As DBAE theory was implemented and its operational characteristics became visible, criticisms and reactions to those criticisms also emerged. It is not my intent to weigh the merits of criticisms of DBAE or the adequacy of the rebuttals. Rather, my purpose is to indicate the ways DBAE theory and practice were often perceived and ways in which DBAE characteristics (that elicited criticisms) may have changed and can now be interpreted as a new form of DBAE, i.e., Neo-DBAE.

In theory and implemented practice, DBAE represented a drastic change from previous instruction which had tended to emphasize freedom of expression, creative responses, and studio production (The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1985). Proponents of child-centered instruction objected to DBAE on the grounds that it ignored individuality, possibilities for idiosyncratic artistic responses, and the holistic nature of art learning (Burton, Lederman, & London, 1988). Other critics suggested that DBAE too closely resembled the rest of education in its emphasis on sequenced instruction, predictable outcomes, and testable learning (Hamblen, 1988). A DBAE emphasis on Western fine art, artistic exemplars, and formalistic lessons in selected curriculum series also received criticism (Blandy & Congdon, 1987).

Dobbs (1988) identified many of these criticisms as myths that had developed in response to a perceived threat to the status quo of studio production, child-centered instruction, and so on. For example, he

pointed out that DBAE was a theory, not a curriculum or any one prespecified program. However, DBAE had become linked with specific curricula, such as the SWRL series for the elementary grades (SWRL, 1975). SWRL was implemented in the Los Angeles School District in the first Institute supported by the Getty Center. Since SWRL can be broadly classified as a teacher-proof curriculum with a strong focus on technical skills and design principles, it more or less followed that DBAE was open to criticisms that DBAE programs fostered a formalistic study of Western fine art with prespecified content and easily identified outcomes. Although Neo-DBAE may not, according to critics of DBAE, adequately address all of the criticisms cited in this section, Neo-DBAE characteristics do represent major differences from DBAE of the 1980s.

DBAE Assumptions and Characteristics

DBAE theory and the ways theory was put into practice had certain basic assumptions and characteristics throughout much of the 1980s (see The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1985; Greer, 1984; The Journal of Aesthetic Education, 1987). The emphasis was on the disciplinary status of art with indications that the areas of studio production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics could be integrated. However, the integration of art with other subject areas was not promoted. Art criticism was often discussed in terms of aesthetic scanning; as such, art criticism dealt with primarily sensory and formal characteristics. The focus was on the art object per se rather than the social functions of art or

interpretations by different sub-cultures. Due to limited time for art in school schedules, it was deemed that DBAE study should focus on art identified by experts as important and significant. This came to mean, as evidenced in curricula and policy statements, the study of Western fine art exemplars (Chapman, 1985; The Journal of Aesthetic Education, 1987; SWRL, 1975). Aesthetics, perhaps the most problematic of the four areas of study, was presented in the literature as consisting of aesthetic inquiry rather than study for purposes of aesthetic experiences, cross-cultural aesthetic awareness, etc. Finally, learning outcomes were to be tested in the manner in which other subject areas are tested; this meant pencil-and-paper objective testing with the hope such measurements would standardize learning activities and curriculum content (Greer & Hoepfner, 1986).

DBAE characteristics identified in this paper are presented in bold brush strokes and are certainly open to debate. In fact, who has actually been responsible for presenting "official" DBAE theory and guidelines for practice has never been clear and in itself indicates a basic dilemma that is starting to work itself out in Neo-DBAE. Information on DBAE has been mainly presented by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, as well as by individuals closely associated with the Getty Center but writing and presenting ideas independently. To a much lesser degree, some individuals with no association with the Getty Center presented their own interpretations as they criticized or implemented DBAE programs along their own lines of interpretation.

In 1987 Clark, Day, and Greer discussed possibilities that DBAE

theory would be refined and further articulated in the future. Writing in 1993, Dunn considered DBAE open to definition, interpretation, and implementation by the field of art education at large. This perspective on "who is in charge" itself indicates a major shift toward Neo-DBAE. In the 1980s, there were constellations of greater and lesser "ownerships" of DBAE, with most art educators looking (or being directed to look) for direction on DBAE matters from the Getty Center. In the 1980s, art educators by and larger were reacting to statements made about the character of DBAE by the Getty Center; in the 1990s, more art educators, who are not necessarily associated with the Getty Center, are interpreting and adding their ideas to DBAE (see Chalmers, 1992, 1993). The acknowledgement that DBAE "belongs to us and it is up to those of us in the field to explore every variation of DBAE we can conceive" (Dunn, 1993, n.p.) suggests major directional changes in policy-making and in ideas on what "qualifies" as a DBAE program of study. I am proposing that this shift in ownership is just one of the changes that heralds Neo-DBAE in the 1990s. In the following section of this paper, DBAE changes will be presented in the general categories of: (a) curriculum content, (b) the integration of art with other subjects, and (c) the assessment of learning outcomes.

Toward Neo-DBAE

Curriculum Content

Throughout the literature on DBAE presented by the Getty Center and by DBAE proponents, new and more encompassing curriculum content is

discussed as appropriate or desirable for DBAE (Dunn, 1993; Greer, 1992). In particular, non-Western art forms and art forms that go beyond traditionally designated fine art are included. Multicultural art forms are part of curriculum materials, conferences and symposia have been held on multiculturalism, and publications are available on how to implement a multicultural DBAE program (Chalmers, 1992, 1993; Newsletter, 1993).

In an apparent response to criticisms that DBAE-designated curricula tended to over-emphasize technical skills and formal qualities, there have also been attempts to be more inclusive of art that is socially critical and of instruction that examines controversial issues in art (Greer, 1992). Although some types of art, such as feminist, folk, domestic, commercial, craft, etc., are not included in DBAE curricula to the extent some might wish, their presence represents a major deviation from the fine art "look" of the 1980s and are strong indications that Neo-DBAE has postmodern leanings.

In the category of curriculum content, perhaps the most powerful change has occurred within the general area of teacher-initiated curricula. In the late 1980s, grants were award to 6 Institutes throughout the United States by the Getty Center. Consisting of a consortium of universities, museums, school districts, and other institutes, each Institute implemented DBAE within the schools in its respective area (Davis, 1992). Although there is little published information on the Institutes, from conference presentations, personal communication, and newsletters it appears that each has developed its

own interpretation of DBAE and that variable instructional practices among, and within, the Institutes are common (see ARTiculator, 1990, 1992; Dunn, 1993). For example, in the Florida Institute, teachers include content that relates to the built environment, to student interests in popular and commercial art, and to the rest of the elementary curriculum (ARTiculator, 1990, 1992). Teachers originated curriculum content, shared ideas with each other, and suggested ways the program can adjust to the needs of diverse student populations. The Institutes, I believe, represent ways in which a rather modernistic and pre-ordered DBAE theory of the 1980s has changed and adjusted to the real life, practical classroom needs of practicing teachers and their students. It should also be noted that such changes via the Institutes are apparently supported by the Getty Center in light of renewal of institute status into the 1990s.

Integration and Instrumental Outcomes

Original DBAE theory offered art educators an alternative to the many instrumental rationales commonly used to justify art instruction, e.g., art to improve reading scores, develop creativity, and foster positive self-concepts. In a DBAE curriculum art would no longer be the servant of other subject areas, at the beck-and-call of general education, and as the answer to deficiencies experienced in other subject areas. However, as indicated above, in some programs, art is taught separately as well as with strong linkages to other subject areas for purposes of enhancing learning in those subjects.

In the initial official DBAE publication, Beyond Creating (The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1985) and later in Eisner's (1987) The Role of Discipline-Based Art Education in America's Schools, the cognitive benefits of art study were presented. Art was discussed as promoting imaginative thinking, abilities to hypothesize, and predispositions to tolerate ambiguity. However, in these publications, cognitive benefits were specific to, and stayed within, the study of art. In contrast, in recent publications supported by the Getty Center (together with the National School Boards Association, the National PTA , and the National Conference of State Legislatures) artistic cognitive benefits are aligned to learning in other subject areas (Loyanco, 1992; NAEA News, 1993). Art is cited as important to learning in general by promoting the following: "Problem solving. Critical reasoning. Curiosity. Higher Test Scores. Creative thinking. Interpersonal skills. Resourcefulness. Self-esteem. Risk Taking." (NAEA News, 1993, p. 12). These are familiar claims, commonly cited by instrumentalists. As such, Neo-DBAE of the 1990s indicates a softening of the stand on the disciplinary, self-focused integrity of art study. A discussion of whether Neo-DBAE is actually still discipline-based is beyond the scope of this paper.

Assessment

The assessment of learning outcomes in a consistent and focused manner has been an important part of DBAE since its inception. Although Day (1985) cited a range of ways in which art might be assessed, in the 1980s the assessment focus was on objective testing. Statements were

made that art should be assessed as other subject areas are (Greer & Hoepfner, 1986), and work was begun in some state departments to develop multiple choice test item banks (Hamblen, 1988; R. Higgins, personal communication, 1990). Recently, however, spokespersons for the Getty Center have indicated that objective testing in its many forms does not adequately relate to art learning and more qualitative forms of assessment, such as portfolio reviews, should be used (Stankiewicz, 1992). In a study of approaches to art assessment, Davis (1992) also found a range of options, much as Day (1985) suggested earlier.

Characteristics of and Reasons for Neo-DBAE

To summarize, Neo-DBAE is characterized as somewhat postmodern in that it incorporates aspects of multiculturalism and collective decision-making. It is contextually responsive to the needs of teachers and students and allows for variable learning outcomes. Art learning is considered holistic and may be integrated with, or used to enhance, learning in other subject areas. Assessment encompasses qualitative approaches, and curriculum content is developed within the needs of given contexts and circumstances.

In this paper it is proposed that DBAE developed toward Neo-DBAE due to two major groups of factors: (a) factors of postmodernism and educational reform and (b) specific actions taken by individuals or institutions to effect DBAE changes. Neo-DBAE is in many respects a response to postmodern manifestations of multiculturalism, proactivism, contextualism, and so on. Neo-DBAE is also the result of criticisms and

actions taken directly against the modernist values of original DBAE theory and practice in the 1980s.

Neo-DBAE is part of the larger education reform movement begun in the 1980s. Originally, DBAE proponents saw art reform in terms of acquiring the legitimating characteristics of general education at a time when, ironically, general educators were highly disillusioned with their own modernistic practices (Hamblen, 1988). Neo-DBAE is actually more aligned with the general education reforms proposed in the 1980s, e.g., the empowerment of teachers, assessment that goes beyond standardized testing, and programs responsible to diverse student populations.

Neo-DBAE is also the outcome of a tremendous amount of critical input from art educators. As noted earlier, criticisms of DBAE emanated from numerous directions, and Neo-DBAE represents an amalgam of perspectives. There appears to be an acknowledgement that DBAE "must evolve to remain educationally relevant" (Dunn, 1993, n.p.) and that there are many possible directions that DBAE can take. Ownership of theory and practice extends to the field in general and "belongs to us and it is up to those of us in the field to explore every variation of DBAE we can conceive" (Dunn, 1993, n.p.). In this sense, the Neo-DBAE characteristics identified in this paper are only the beginning.

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